

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 34, No. 4

Urbana, Illinois

January, 1947

Published every month except June, July, August, and September. Subscription price, \$1.00 per year; single copies, 15 cents, or two for 25 cents. *Entered as second-class matter October 29, 1941, at the postoffice at Urbana, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879.* Communications may be addressed to C. W. Roberts, 204a Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois.

Plays Studied in Junior and Senior High Schools

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Purpose:

This study was made to determine: (1) what plays are studied in grades seven through twelve; (2) the frequency of inclusion of plays; and (3) the correlation or discrepancy in grade placement.

Materials Used:

The report is based upon a survey of fifty-four textbooks suitable for use in grades seven through twelve. All textbooks surveyed were published between 1932 and 1945. Six texts were surveyed in grade seven; six in grade eight; nine in grade nine; nine in grade ten; twelve in grade eleven; and twelve in grade twelve. The bibliography shows the grade placement of the texts surveyed.

With the exception of one partial play,¹ all plays printed in the texts are included in the study.

Plays Studied in Grades Seven Through Twelve:

The survey of the textbooks showed that plays of various length are studied. A number of short, one-act plays are studied in the seventh grade; by the twelfth grade the five-act tragedies of Shakespeare are studied. Table A gives a summary of the

¹ Balcony scene only from "Romeo and Juliet," *The Realm of Reading—Heritage*; Barnes and others, American Book Company, 1940.

TABLE A
TYPES OF PLAYS INCLUDED IN TEXTS SURVEYED

Type of play	Different plays	Frequency of inclusion
Plays by Shakespeare.....	5	32
Non-Shakespearean:		
Five act.....	2	5
Four act.....	3	3
Three act.....	3	4
Two act.....	1	1
One act.....	68	104
Radio-drama.....	6	6
Total.....	88	155

various types of plays studied throughout the six years. The second column gives the number of different plays included in the fifty-four texts; the last column indicates the frequency of inclusion of each type of play. For example, in all grades there

TABLE B
TYPES OF PLAYS INCLUDED IN THE VARIOUS GRADES

Type of play	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion
Plays by Shakespeare.....	..	..	3	3	3	8
Non-Shakespearean:						
Five act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Four act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Three act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Two act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
One act.....	9	9	7	7	13	14
Radio-drama.....	1	1	3	3	..	..
Total.....	10	10	13	13	16	22

Type of play	Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion
Plays by Shakespeare.....	3	8	1	1	1	12
Non-Shakespearean:						
Five act.....	1	2	1	1	2	2
Four act.....	1	1	..	..	2	2
Three act.....	..	..	1	2	2	3
Two act.....	1	1	..	..	..	..
One act.....	16	19	18	27	18	27
Radio-drama.....	1	1	1	1	..	..
Total.....	23	32	22	32	25	46

are five different plays by Shakespeare studied with a total frequency of inclusion of thirty-two.

Table B gives information as to the types of plays studied at each grade level. The first sub-column of each grade level is devoted to the number of different plays according to types; in the second sub-column, the frequency of inclusion of those plays. Thus, for example, in the twelfth grade there are eighteen different one-act plays with a total frequency of inclusion of twenty-seven times.

The following lists give the names of the different plays studied at each grade level.

PLAYS STUDIED IN SEVENTH GRADE

One act (non-Shakespearean):

Barnaby Lee — Anna M. Luetkenhaus
Every Boy — Anna M. Luetkenhaus
Sailing West to Find the East — Margaret Parsons
The Christmas Guest — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
The Knave of Hearts — Louise Saunders
The Snow Witch — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
The Three Wishes — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
William Tell and the Apple — Friedrich Schiller
Young Michael Angelo — Constance D'Arcy Mackay

Radio-drama:

Rip Van Winkle — James M. Morris

PLAYS STUDIED IN EIGHTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

A Midsummer Night's Dream
As You Like It
Julius Caesar

One act (non-Shakespearean):

Nevertheless — Stuart Walker
Spreading the News — Lady Gregory
The Evil Kettle — Lord Dunsany
The Princess Marries the Page — Edna St. Vincent Millay
The Sentimental Scarecrow — Rachel Field
The Violin Maker of Cremona — François Coppée
What Men Live By — Virginia Church

Radio-drama:

A Christmas Broadcast — James Robert White
Brazil — Wyllis Cooper
By the Dawn's Early Light — Irene Cameron

PLAYS STUDIED IN NINTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

A Midsummer Night's Dream
 As You Like It
 Julius Caesar

One act (non-Shakespearean):

House of the Heart — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
 Master Skylark — Anna M. Luetkenhaus
 My Lady's Lace — Edward Knoblock
 Nevertheless — Stuart Walker
 Not Quite Such a Goose — Elizabeth Gale
 The Brink of Silence — Esther E. Galbraith
 The Grand Cham's Diamond — Allan Monkhouse
 The Mad Tea Party — Alice Erya Gerstenberg
 The Patchwork Quilt — Rachel Field
 The Valiant — H. Hall and R. M. Middlemass
 Silver Lining — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
 Spreading the News — Lady Gregory
 Young America — F. Ballard and P. Franklin

PLAYS STUDIED IN TENTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

As You Like It
 Julius Caesar
 The Merchant of Venice

Five act (non-Shakespearean):

She Stoops to Conquer — Oliver Goldsmith

Four act (non-Shakespearean):

The Piper — Josephine P. Peabody

Two act (non-Shakespearean):

The Pirates of Penzance — Sir William S. Gilbert

One act (non-Shakespearean):

Allison's Lad — Beulah M. Dix
 A Night at an Inn — Lord Dunsany
 Ashes of Roses — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
 Enter the Hero — Theresa Helburn
 Sham — Frank G. Tompkins
 Spreading the News — Lady Gregory
 The Beau of Bath — Constance D'Arcy Mackay
 The Grand Cham's Diamond — Allan Monkhouse
 The Little Father of the Wilderness — A. Strong and L. Osbourne
 The Lost Silk Hat — Lord Dunsany
 The Medicine Show — Stuart Walker
 The Trysting Place — Booth Tarkington

The Valiant — H. Hall and R. M. Middlemass
Trifles — Susan Glaspell
Wisdom Teeth — Rachel Field
Yellow Jack — P. deKruif and S. Howard

Radio-drama:

The Fall of the City — Archibald MacLeish

PLAYS STUDIED IN ELEVENTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

Julius Caesar

Five act (non-Shakespearean):

She Stoops to Conquer — Oliver Goldsmith

Three act (non-Shakespearean):

Abe Lincoln in Illinois — Robert E. Sherwood

One act (non-Shakespearean):

A Night at an Inn — Lord Dunsany

Evening Clothes — Zona Gale

Finders-Keepers — George Kelly

Ile — Eugene O'Neill

In the Zone — Eugene O'Neill

Poor Aubrey — George Kelly

Sam Average — Percy MacKaye

Sham — Frank G. Tompkins

The Emperor Jones — Eugene O'Neill

The Last of the Lowries — Paul Green

The Londonderry Air — Rachel Field

The Medicine Show — Stuart Walker

The Neighbors — Zona Gale

The Sleeping Car — William D. Howells

The Trysting Place — Booth Tarkington

Trifles — Susan Glaspell

Where But in America? — Oscar M. Wolff

Where the Cross Is Made — Eugene O'Neill

Radio-drama:

The Gentleman from Paris — Robert Tallman

PLAYS STUDIED IN TWELFTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

Macbeth

Five act (non-Shakespearean):

She Stoops to Conquer — Oliver Goldsmith

The School for Scandal — Richard B. Sheridan

Four act (non-Shakespearean):

Merton of the Movies — George S. Kaufman and M. Connelly
 The Admirable Crichton — Sir James Barrie

Three act (non-Shakespearean):

Strife — John Galsworthy
 The Skin Game — John Galsworthy

One act (non-Shakespearean):

A Night at an Inn — Lord Dunsany
 Everyman — Anonymous
 Helena's Husband — Philip Moeller
 Ile — Eugene O'Neill
 Noah's Flood — Anonymous
 Riders to the Sea — John M. Synge
 Shall We Join the Ladies? — James M. Barrie
 Spreading the News — Lady Gregory
 The Boy Comes Home — A. A. Milne
 The Chester Pageant of the Deluge — Anonymous
 The Maker of Dreams — Oliphant Down
 The Old Lady Shows Her Medals — James M. Barrie
 The Rising of the Moon — Lady Gregory
 The Second Shepherd's Play — Anonymous
 The Twelve-Pound Look — James M. Barrie
 The Workhouse Ward — Lady Gregory
 Wurzel-Flummery — A. A. Milne
 X-O — John Drinkwater

Frequency of Inclusion of Plays:

Frequency of inclusion is used here to mean the number of times a play (or plays) is included in one or more of the text-books surveyed.

The eighty-eight different plays in the fifty-four texts surveyed have a total frequency of inclusion of one hundred fifty-five. Twenty-five of these plays have a frequency of inclusion of ninety-two. (For this breakdown by name and number of frequency of inclusion see the last column of Tables C and D.) The other sixty-three plays have a frequency of inclusion of only one.

Correlation in Grade Placement:

Correlation in grade placement is used here to indicate that a play is included in two or more of the texts surveyed at the same grade level *only*.

An examination of Table C will show that only eleven plays have a correlation in grade placement. It will also be noted that, with the exception of one play in grade ten, all correlation is in

TABLE C
CORRELATION IN GRADE PLACEMENT

Name of play and author	7	8	9	10	11	12	Freq. incl.
Macbeth..... William Shakespeare	12	12
Strife..... John Galsworthy	2	2
Allison's Lad..... Beulah M. Dix	2	..	..	2
Everyman..... Anonymous	2	2
Riders to the Sea..... John M. Synge	5	5
The Boy Comes Home..... A. A. Milne	2	2
The Emperor Jones..... Eugene O'Neill	2	..	2
The Neighbors..... Zona Gale	3	..	3
The Rising of the Moon..... Lady Gregory	2	2
Where But in America?..... Oscar M. Wolff	3	..	3
Where the Cross Is Made..... Eugene O'Neill	4	..	4

the eleventh and twelfth grades. It is interesting to note that "Macbeth" is the only play with one hundred per cent correlation. This play appears in each of the twelve twelfth-grade texts surveyed.

Discrepancy in Grade Placement:

Discrepancy in grade placement means that a play is included in two or more of the texts surveyed at two or more *different* grade levels.

Table D shows a grade range discrepancy of from two to five grades. Such a play as "Trifles" is listed in the tenth and eleventh grades (two grade discrepancy) while "Spreading the News" has a five grade discrepancy. Of the twenty-five different plays with a frequency of inclusion of over one, fourteen have grade discrepancies; the other eleven have correlation in grade placement.

Conclusions:

In drawing conclusions from this report, it must be borne in mind that the report covers only fifty-four textbooks throughout the six grades. However, the data presented here may be an index

TABLE D
DISCREPANCY IN GRADE PLACEMENT

Name of play and author	Grade range disc.	7	8	9	10	11	12	Freq. incl.
A Midsummer Night's Dream.... W. Shakespeare	2	..	1	5	..	..	..	6
As You Like It..... W. Shakespeare	3	..	1	1	4	..	..	6
Julius Caesar..... W. Shakespeare	4	..	1	2	3	1	..	7
She Stoops to Conquer..... O. Goldsmith	3	..	..	..	2	1	1	4
A Night at an Inn..... Lord Dunsany	3	..	..	..	1	1	3	5
Ile..... Eugene O'Neill	2	..	..	..	..	2	1	3
Nevertheless..... Stuart Walker	2	..	1	1	..	..	..	2
Sham..... F. G. Tompkins	2	..	..	..	1	2	..	3
Spreading the News..... Lady Gregory	5	..	1	2	1	..	1	5
The Grand Cham's Diamond.... A. Monkhouse	2	..	..	1	2	..	..	3
The Medicine Show..... Stuart Walker	2	..	..	..	1	1	..	2
The Trysting Place..... B. Tarkington	2	..	..	..	2	1	..	3
The Valiant..... H. Hall & R. M. Middlemass	2	..	..	1	1	..	..	2
Trifles..... S. Glaspell	2	..	..	..	1	1	..	2

to the trends and practices found in other texts published between 1932 and 1945.

1. As might be expected, there are more one-act plays studied than any other type. However, it is interesting to note that 44.6% of the total number of acts are contained in the two- or more act plays and the remaining 55.4% are in the one-act plays and radio-dramas.

2. The study shows that of the twenty-five plays with a frequency of inclusion of more than one, 56% have grade range discrepancies; the other 44% have correlation in grade placement.

3. "Macbeth" seems to be the play most frequently studied in high schools. As noted previously, it is also the only play with 100% correlation in grade placement. Of the eleven plays having grade placement correlation, only two of these ("Macbeth" and "Strife") have more than one act.

4. "Spreading the News" has the highest grade range discrepancy. Of the fourteen different plays with grade range discrepancies, four are five-act plays; the other ten are one-act plays.

5. This study indicates that one-act plays are studied throughout the six years; plays by Shakespeare are introduced in the eighth grade; and the two-, three-, four-, and non-Shakespearean five-act plays are introduced in the tenth grade.

6. The study of the radio-drama seems to be a quite recent development. Four of the five plays of this type included in the fifty-four textbooks were printed in texts published in 1944.

7. Of significance to the classroom teacher is the large number of plays apparently suitable for study by junior and senior high school students. The teacher may choose from this large number those best suited to the interests and abilities of her students.

8. A careful study of the correlation and discrepancy tables should be valuable to the teacher. These tables show that the editors are in agreement upon the grade placement of some plays but at wide variance upon the placement of other plays. Where the correlation is high, the teacher will probably be inclined to teach those plays at the agreed grade level. In teaching those plays with a wide grade range discrepancy, the teacher will probably study carefully the needs, interests, and abilities of her individual classes before assigning the plays to a definite grade level.

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Taking the Spinach Out of Shakespeare

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Nearly every high school student in the United States, at one time or another during his English studies, is confronted with the plays of William Shakespeare. To most students, the situation is similar to meeting a long talked about celebrity for the first time. The name is familiar and interesting, but the celebrity turns out to be less glamorous than expected — wears a toupee, for instance, or speaks with an unintelligible accent — and the first meeting is looked upon as the last. Many students, in fact, having met Shakespeare, walk away with a feeling of decided animosity.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare is fed to high school students, freshmen to seniors, unremittingly year after year. There must be some reason. There is. Shakespeare's plays are entertaining, exciting, thrilling, inspiring. If students fail to discover this, the fault must lie, not in the plays themselves, but in the way they are taught. A teacher can make or break a student's enthusiasm for Shakespeare, depending upon how she introduces the man to her classes.

There are, I think, at least three common "schools" of teaching Shakespeare. They are the Spinach School, the Bronze Pedestal School, and the Detective School. Each one, in its way, contributes much toward snuffing out any spark of enthusiasm for Shakespeare cherished by the student. In general, only the toughest-spirited students manage to escape with their original spark still glowing brightly.

The Spinach School of teaching Shakespeare operates on the theory that "it's good for you" to know something about the plays of Shakespeare. The plays are forced upon the students to make them cultured in much the same way spinach is forced upon a child "to make his hair curly." If the child objects on the grounds that he does not want curly hair, the exasperated reply is, "Well, eat it anyway; it's good for you." Some teachers, finding a discouraging lack of desire on the part of students to become cultured,

resort to assigning famous passages to be memorized in a kind of dim hope that the future, in which the student will recognize the value of the work, will bring gratification.

Unfortunately, most children learn at an early age to see through their parents' dissimulations, and the faintest suggestion of "it's good for you" is automatically translated to "whatever it is, I won't like it." Psychologists tell us that learned behavior patterns are hard to break. Is it any wonder, then, that a similar appeal as grounds for the study of Shakespeare should cause a similar reaction? The Spinach School is doomed by its very aim. The student comes to look upon Shakespeare with the same suspicious foreboding that he eyes a teaspoonful of medicine topped by a peppermint cream. The reward is not sufficient to dispel the bitter taste.

The Bronze Pedestal School might be said to err in the opposite direction. Here, instead of being filled to the saturation point with Shakespeare, the student is cautioned to stand away so far that the features of the exquisite bust atop the high pedestal are blurred by the light of its glittering halo. Taught to grovel in the dust on his knees before the Almighty Playwright, the student scarcely dares raise his eyes to glimpse the hallowed work of his pen. Instead, the teacher, like a High Priestess, reverently imparts the universal truths:

Shakespeare, the playwright, is one playwright: there is no other playwright before him (nor after).

The critics declare the glory of Shakespeare: and the scholars show his handywork.

Other dramatists die, their plays are forgotten: but the plays of Shakespeare will stand forever.

The love of Shakespeare is the beginning of knowledge: but fools (i.e., students) despise wisdom and instruction.

The student who enters this school, bareheaded, stares abashed at the idol before him. Convinced that he could never hope to understand it all, he bows timidly and backs out, closing the door softly behind him.

The Detective School, on the other hand, operates with business-like method and precision. At the very beginning of the class, Shakespeare is described in a police-report manner. His appearance, as far as known, age, occupation, and place in which

last seen are presented clearly and factually. Then the plays are brought forth as evidence of the man's occupation. The student, supervised by the teacher-chief, follows a finger down the page, noting carefully all the passages that might give additional information about the man. So many metaphors, similes, figures of speech, etc., prove that Shakespeare was a poet; type of act division, number and kind of scenes, suggested actions, etc., prove that he was a dramatist during the Elizabethan Age; Latin quotations, references to other works, etc., prove that he went to school. The possibilities are endless.

The ambitious student might be spurred to explore, on his own, evidence of Shakespeare's favorite color, Shakespeare alias Bacon, or any number of intriguing topics. This exercise is fine for the student who plans eventually to enter the Secret Service, but to the average student the Detective School is dull, grinding work. The plays are mines of hidden information, source material for oral and written reports, and little else. Any suggestion that Shakespeare's plays might be regarded as something to read or see for pure enjoyment tends to be met with sceptical expressions of incredulity.

In opposition to the Spinach, Bronze Pedestal, and Detective schools, there is the archie school. The archie school is founded upon the principle that Shakespeare is fun, is written for the "common man," and is enjoyable reading. The gifted humorist Don Marquis, according to his own confession, had an interesting cockroach friend, archie. archie would type his experiences on Don Marquis' typewriter, but, since he could not operate the shift key and had difficulty with punctuation, his documents were unique in form and appearance.

One night archie told how he "got acquainted with a parrot named pete" who used
to belong to the fellow
that ran the mermaid tavern
in london.¹

¹ don marquis, *archie and mehitabel*, "pete the parrot and shakespeare", doubleday doran and company inc, 1936, new york. Note: The book is printed entirely in lower case, without punctuation. All following quotes are from the same source.

pete had often heard a bill shakespeare at the tavern
 boring his friends about what
 he might have been and done
 if only he had a fair break .

Some of pete s recollections of bill s conversations give an
 illuminating picture of the man and his attitude toward his
 work:

i might have been a poet
 if i had kept away from the theatre

.

slap stick comedies and
 blood and thunder tragedies
 and melodramas say i wonder
 if that boy heard you order
 another bottle frankie
 the only compensation is that i get
 a chance now and then
 to stick in a little poetry
 when nobody is looking .

Discussing the theatrical tastes of the london public, bill says
 anyone could write a play to satisfy it

. . . if he puts enough
 murder in them what they want
 is kings talking like kings
 never had sense enough to talk
 and stabbings and stranglings
 and fat men making love
 and clowns basting each
 other with clubs and cheap puns .

Then he outlines the manner in which he starts to write a new
 play:

the manager hands me some mouldy old
 manuscript and says
 bill here s a plot for you
 this is the third of the month
 by the tenth i want a good
 script out of this that we

can start rehearsals on
 not too big a cast
 and not too much of your
 damned poetry either
 you know your old
 familiar line of hokum
 they eat up that falstaff stuff
 of yours ring him in again
 and give them a good ghost
 or two and remember we gotta
 have something dick burbage can get
 his teeth into and be sure
 and stick in a speech
 somewhere the queen will take
 for a personal compliment and if
 you get in a line or two somewhere
 about the honest english yeoman
 it s always a pretty good stunt

.
 but i don t need to tell
 you bill you know this game
 just some of your ordinary
 hokum .

With this view in mind of a family man worried about money:
 i need the money i ve got
 a family to support down in
 the country ,
 who can't quit the "rotten business":
 i can t i can t says bill
 i ve been at it too long i ve got to
 the place now where i can t
 write anything else
 but this cheap stuff ,

the student comes closer to a real understanding and enjoyment
 of Shakespeare. Here was a man who wrote plays the people
 liked and, since people do not change too much, still like.

The student should be allowed to discover what Shakespeare has to offer on his own level of enjoyment before he is forced into an artificial "appreciation" of the playwright. If the student enjoys low comedy, the teacher could point out such passages in the particular play at hand, and, perhaps, suggest others in other plays. If "stabblings and strangling" are his meat, certainly there is plenty of it to be had in Shakespeare. If, as sometimes happens, the student really loves poetry, there is no doubt that the plays of Shakespeare will prove a thrilling discovery to him.

Shakespeare has some sort of appeal to make to everyone. In the archie school, the teacher does her imaginative best to see to it that everyone finds something enjoyable in Shakespeare. Only with initial enjoyment comes real appreciation, with real appreciation comes greater enjoyment.

Announcement

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Spring Meeting

Saturday, April 12, 1947

Bismarck Hotel, Randolph and LaSalle, Chicago

10:30 Business Meeting.

11:00 Talk by Miss Dorothy Lake, Evanston High School. Miss Lake is an exchange teacher from England and will tell us about English schools.

12:30 Luncheon. \$2 per person. Reservations must be placed with Ellen Burkhart, Benton, Illinois, by Tuesday, April 8.

Further Apologies

Our November issue carried a note of apology for our failure to include several schools on the honor rolls published in the October issue. Through a further confusion, Peoria Central was given recognition which should have gone to Pekin Township High School. We now owe apologies to Peoria and Pekin. Peoria Central High School, with an average of 3.278, was correctly ranked in third place in Honor Roll I, Section A, as originally published. Pekin Township High School, with an average of 3.143, should have appeared in twelfth place.

— THE EDITOR

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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